ERIE COUNTY LOCKUPS RATED AMONG THE 5 WORST IN STATE | PAGE C1

THE BUFFALO NEWS

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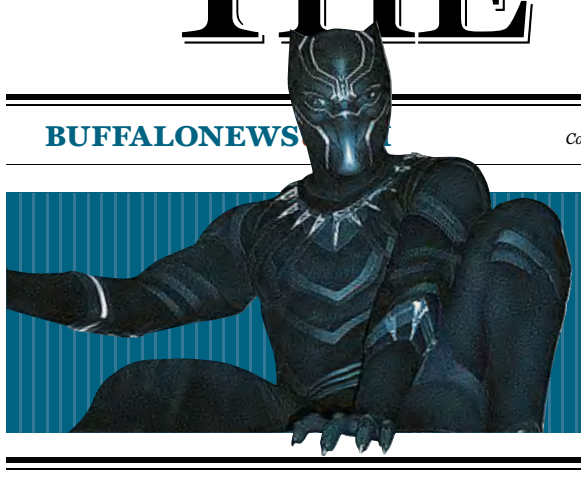
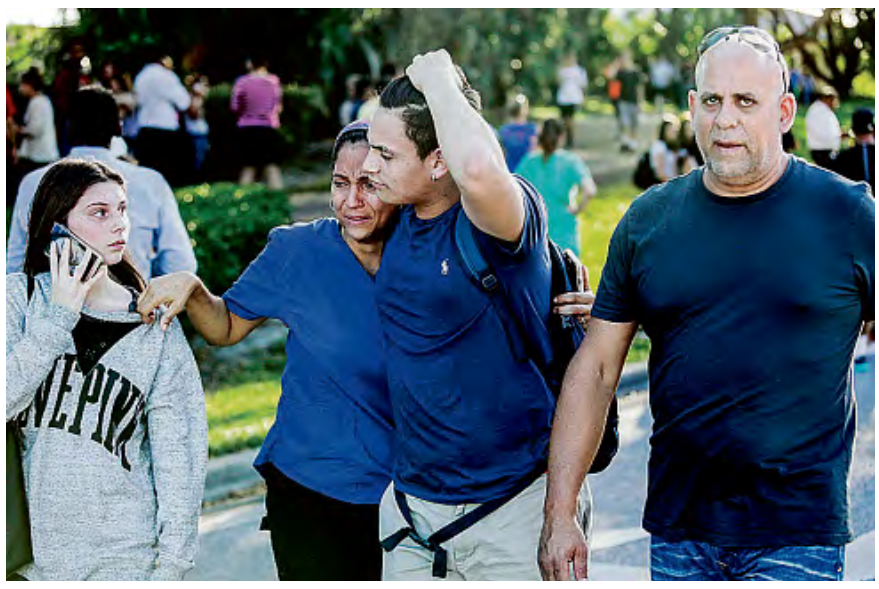


NEW KING ON SUPERHERO BLOCK

» Everything you need to know about 'Black Panther' and his ★★★★ movie | PAGES 4, 14-15

» Rich and spicy Big Easy dining is quite easy to find at Chester's Cajun Grill | PAGE 12

Ex-student kills 17 in school shooting spree



New York Times

Students and parents embrace after a shooting at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla. The death toll of 17 could climb.

Florida police arrest suspected gunman after rampage spreads horror across campus

By Audra D.S. Burch and Patricia Mezzei
NEW YORK TIMES

PARKLAND, Fla. – A heavily armed young man barged into his former high school about an hour northwest of Miami on Wednesday, opening fire on terrified students and teachers and leaving a death toll of 17 that could rise even higher, authorities said.

Students huddled in horror in their classrooms, with some of them training their cellphones on the carnage, capturing sprawled bodies, screams and gunfire that began with a few shots and then continued with more and more. The dead included students and adults, some of whom were shot outside the school and others inside the sprawling three-story building.

The gunman, armed with a semiautomatic AR-15 rifle, was identified as Nikolas Cruz, 19, who had been expelled from the school, authorities said. He began his shooting rampage outside Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in this suburban neighborhood shortly before dismissal time around 2:40 p.m. He then made his way inside and proceeded down hallways he knew well, firing at students and teachers who were scurrying for cover, the authorities said.

"Oh my God! Oh my God!" one student yelled over and over in one video circulating on social media, as gunfire boomed in the background.

Another video showed police officers bursting into a classroom to evacuate students. "Hands! Hands! Put your hands up!" an officer ordered. "Put your phones away!"

By the end of the rampage, Cruz had killed 12 people inside the school and three outside it, including someone standing on a street corner, Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel said. Two more victims died of their injuries in local hospitals. The aftermath at the school was an eerie shrine, with chairs upended, a computer screen shattered with bullet holes and floors stained with blood.

"This is catastrophic," said Israel, who has three children who graduated from the high school. "There really are no words."

Cruz was arrested in Coral Springs, a neighboring city a couple of miles from the school, about an hour after fleeing the scene, authorities said. He had slipped out of the

See **Shooting** on Page A12

Olean police get letter linked to '84 cold case

Captain says note may lead to solution

By Maki Becker
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

Thirty-four years after an Olean woman went missing, an anonymous, handwritten letter was delivered to the Olean Police Department.

The letter, which arrived on the anniversary of Josephine Doris Despard's disappearance on Feb. 7, 1984, isn't a confession or a map, said Capt. Robert Blovsky.

But Blovsky, who joined the police department 10 years after Despard disappeared and is now the head of the police department's criminal unit, hopes that whoever wrote the note could help solve a cold case that has haunted Olean for more than three decades.

Blovsky said he believes there's a chance the person may have information that could help investigators finally find her and give her family some peace.

"I think they wanted us to know that there was more we should be looking into," Blovsky said. "I wish I could talk to this person. Obviously this person knows more. I would like to pick their brain."

Blovsky emphasized that the writer of the letter isn't in any trouble. And he said, "it can all be confidential."

Despard was 26 and the mother of a 6-year-old daughter, according to the Olean

See **Despard** on Page A12

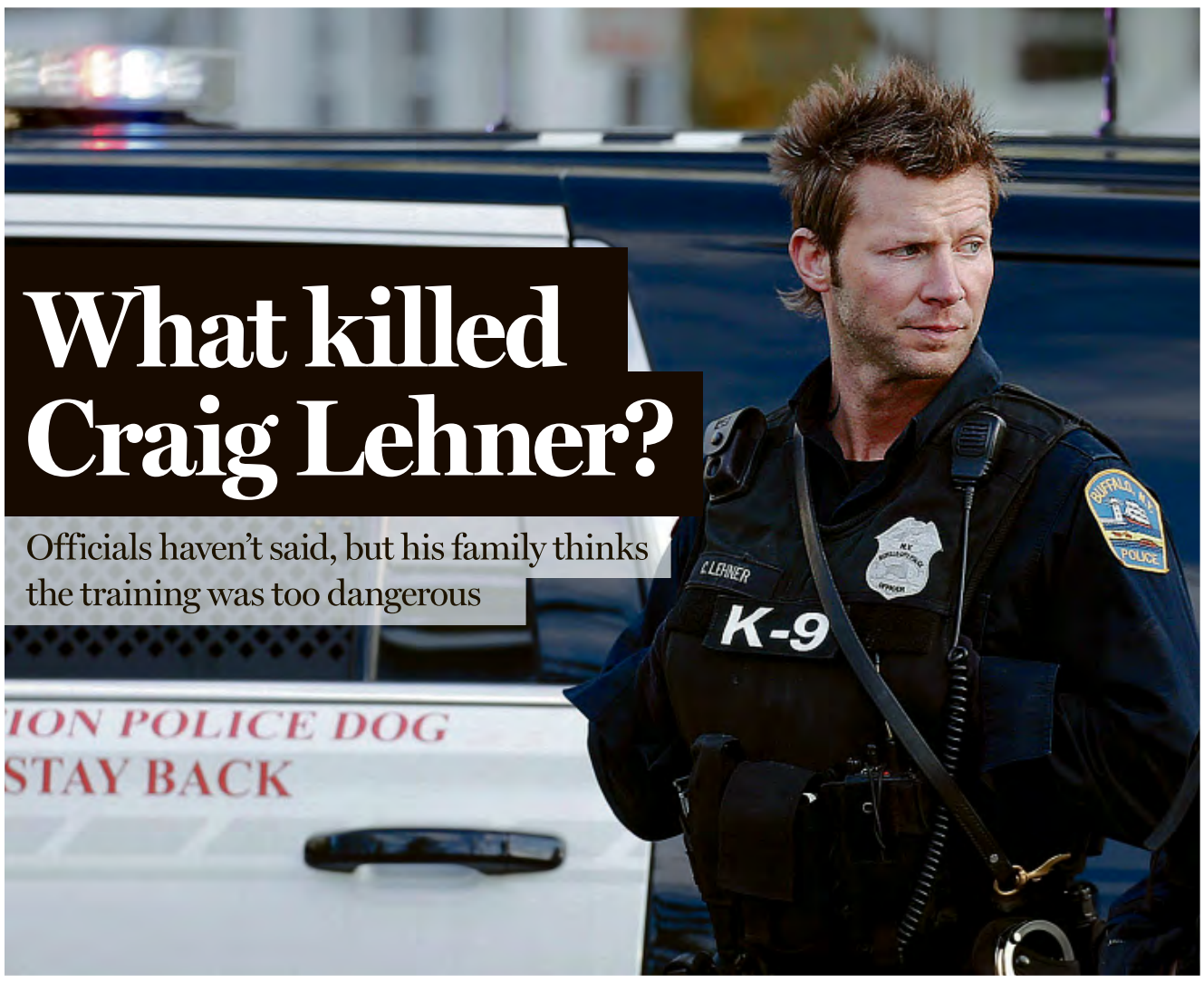
Mangan tumbles out

Getty Images

Patricia Mangan of Derby competes in the women's giant slalom at the Pyeongchang Winter Olympic Games. Mangan, an alternate, fell and was eliminated from the competition. Story on Page B1.

What killed Craig Lehner?

Officials haven't said, but his family thinks the training was too dangerous



Robert Kirkham/Buffalo News file photo

Craig Lehner, a K-9 officer who joined the Buffalo Police Underwater Recovery Team six months before his death last October, had just jumped into the water for a training exercise in the Niagara River when he ran into trouble.

By Maki Becker and Lou Michel
NEWS STAFF REPORTERS

The sister of Craig Lehner, the Buffalo police officer who died during a dive training accident in the Niagara River in October, says the Buffalo Police Department should not have allowed the training exercise to take place because it was too dangerous; that her brother had not been properly trained before going into the water; and that his diving equipment was "in dangerous, unsafe and/or defective condition," according to court papers she filed late last month.

Lehner, a K-9 officer who joined the Buffalo Police Underwater Recovery Team six months before his death, had just jumped into the water for a training exercise in the fast-moving waters of the Niagara River when he ran into trouble.

A frantic recovery effort followed, as law enforcement officers and first responders from around the region came to assist. On the fifth day of searching, Lehner's body was recovered about two miles downstream.

Lehner's sister, Donna Wilson, filed a notice of claim, the first step in a lawsuit, against the City of Buffalo and the Buffalo Police Department on Jan. 25. In it, she says the training accident "was caused by the reason of negligence, recklessness and carelessness" on the part of

See **Lehner** on Page A5

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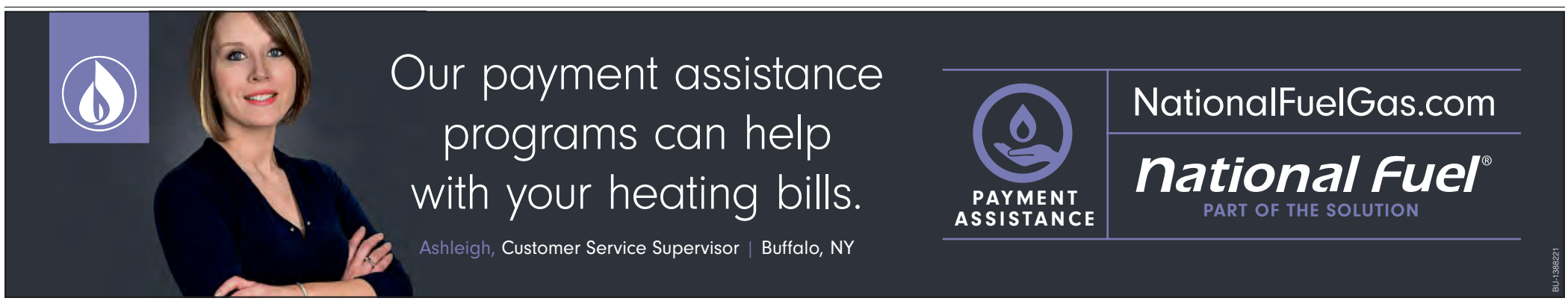
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